

STUDENTS HELPING STUDENTS



NAVIGATING YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR



**Prentice
Hall Press**

Student Editors

Allison Lombardo is a sophomore at Brown University who now knows more than ever about navigating through the college maze and living on her own. She's learned to call her mother, coerce others into fixing her computer, and hit the snooze button.

Always up for an adventure, she's glad she took the risk to come to Brown. The experiences she had in her first year have altered the life she thought she'd carved out for herself and have opened up opportunities she had never before considered. And that has never been a bad thing. Her future is open, undetermined, and exciting.

Allison would like to thank her parents, her sisters, and her grandmothers for their support. She also acknowledges all of her friends—from home and Brown—who have given her conversation, encouragement, and memories of joy.

Katharine Jackson is a junior at Harvard College. A psychology concentrator in Quincy House, Kate's activities include singing with the Kuumba Singers, dancing with Expressions Dance Company, ushering at Memorial Church, and writing and performing in the Women IN Color Project. She is also a member in organizations such as Women IN Color, the Undergraduate Relations Council, and The Seneca, Inc.

Kate will never forget the difficulties she encountered—academically, socially, and personally—making the transition from her suburban high school in the middle of Ohio to the auspicious

Table of Contents

<i>What Freshman Year Really Is</i>	1
<i>What It's Not</i>	3
1. Leaving Home	5
2. Getting Your Bearings	15
3. Avoiding Living Hell	28
4. Getting to Work	44
5. After-Class Fun	77
6. Getting a Social Life	88
7. Navigating the Dating Maze	103
8. The Freshman Fifteen and Other Maladies	111
9. Managing Life Stuff	123

What Freshman Year Really Is

For many of us, freshman year is the first time we'll live away from our childhood homes, our families, and the people we grew up with. Leaving behind all that's familiar and having to adjust to new people and settings, while not letting academics slip by, can be daunting. It *is* daunting. Not only is everything new, but now you have more control over your life and constantly have to make decisions about its direction.

Your first year of college can be filled with dramatic high and low points. One day you meet a new friend with whom you connect better than with anyone from high school, the next day you fail an exam you thought you'd aced. You'll be surprised, you'll be disappointed, you'll be excited, and hopefully, the last thing you'll be is bored.

Freshman year is a unique experience for everyone. Every person, school, state, region, and campus is different. This means

party scenes will vary as greatly as academics, rules, and opportunities. There is no typical or right freshman-year experience, and you shouldn't constantly compare yours to what the "right" one might be. Do what makes sense for you because, above all, your first year of college is one of the first times in your life when you get to make your own decisions and stand by them.

Freshman year is the time to keep an open mind and try out new things, from getting involved in activities you never thought of in high school to making friends with people to whom you never thought you'd relate. Testing out new ground sometimes means feeling insecure and uncomfortable, at least for a bit, and one of the best skills the first year of college teaches is how to overcome those feelings. Trust yourself to step out of your comfort zone—there's no better time to do this than now.

What It's Not

Your first year at college is not the most important and will not impact your college education, your career, or your life in a huge way. You have time to try things out and not get them perfect on the first go-around. Everyone in their right mind will forgive a few lower-than-should-be grades on your freshman year transcript. And no one in his or her right mind will care about you dropping out of the Ultimate Frisbee club midway through the year.

This is also not the time to set in stone what you'd like to do in college or with the rest of your life. If you don't take time to explore all of your options, you might settle on one you won't like later. So take the time, and don't pressure yourself to know everything right away. Graduation is four years away, in case you've forgotten.

Freshman year is not a good time to be afraid or closed-minded. Try new things, meet new people, be open to newness in

general—it can be so rewarding. Finding out what you don't like is as important as knowing what you love.

Freshman year is definitely not the defining year of the rest of your college experience. If you have an awful one, you can readjust and make the next ones better. If you have an amazing one, you shouldn't stop trying to make the next years as great. Don't get annoyed with all those people calling you a young frosh—as a young frosh you have a license to make mistakes, change, and leave behind whatever you don't think makes your life better.

Leaving Home

You know you're an official college student during the moment you wave goodbye to your family from your dorm room. After months of planning out this new life, it's here. But while it's really exciting, leaving home is often harder than most of us expect.

Don't despair, and give yourself some slack as you deal with this change. Even the coolest, toughest football quarterbacks get sad and hesitant about leaving what has been so comfortable and familiar for so long. Even if you're not going far away to college, this is a big transition for you and your family. You're becoming more independent, meeting new people, and encountering new experiences. Most transitions are a challenge.

As you head off to school, here are a few things to keep in mind.

- Take It or Leave It
- It's Time to Say Goodbye

- Remember Old Friends
- Home Strange Home

Take It or Leave It

This may seem obvious, but there are really only a few things that you'll need at college—and many things you'll want to bring. If you lucked out with a huge dorm room—yes, we're all envious—you have much more liberty in deciding what goes with you. For the rest of you, one piece of advice: Don't over-pack. You'll end up being stuck with stuff you won't use, and it will take up precious space that can help keep you sane.

Regardless of your room size, here are some must-haves, in no particular order:

- ✓ **Computer.** If it's at all possible to buy one or borrow one, do it. Most colleges have pretty good computer facilities that you can use for free, but they're often crowded and noisy, and not in your own room. If you have a choice, opt for a laptop—you can bring it to the library or outside, and can have more options for where to work. But laptops attract thieves, so you might also consider buying a lock to keep your laptop from wandering off.
- ✓ **Extra socks and underwear.** Doing laundry is expensive and it's a pain. You can always rewear jeans and sweaters, but clean underwear and socks are key.
- ✓ **Flip-flops.** Using communal showers equals foot fungus, an unattractive yet common problem in dorms. It may feel

weird to be wearing shoes to the shower at first, but in the long run your feet will appreciate it.

- ✓ **Climate-appropriate clothes.** If possible, try to bring only what you'll need for the season and climate you'll be living in. There is usually not a lot of room for extra clothes, especially bulky sweaters or excessive sandals. You can always trade clothes at home during winter or spring break.
- ✓ **Storage bins.** Stacking things is the way to go in your cell block . . . sorry, dorm room. You can get a huge variety of storage bins in stores like Ikea, Target, or Bed Bath & Beyond.
- ✓ **Group games.** Board games, cards, and any other communal games will make you popular with your classmates. They are a great way to make new friends and are perfect for fun procrastination.
- ✓ **Home reminders.** Bring things that remind you of home, such as a few pictures, your old basketball, or posters. It's not childish to show off stuff from home, as long as you don't go overboard, and your new friends will appreciate the stories behind the objects.
- ✓ **Dictionary and thesaurus.** If you have them, bring them to save money. Although most computer programs have a thesaurus built in, the paper version has many more options.
- ✓ **Halogen lamp.** Fluorescent lights are cold, kill your eyes, and are not extremely intimate for that late-night date. Get a cheap halogen lamp and you'll use it for years—many

recent grads still can't part with theirs. But before you go out and buy one, make sure your college doesn't consider them a fire hazard.

- ☑ **Clothes hamper.** You want something roomy and something you can easily carry with you when doing laundry.
- ☑ **First-aid kit.** Just in case. Definitely bring Band-aids.

On the flip side, here are a few things to leave at home, if you can help yourself:

- ☑ **Twenty favorite books.** You'll be reading a ton of new material, and having dozens of your favorite books nearby can serve as an unwelcome distraction. A few, maybe, but not more than a few.
- ☑ **A year's supply of cereal and toothpaste.** "Why would I?" you're thinking. Good, keep thinking that. But some have, so we just wanted to make sure—there are stores where you're going and you will be coming home in the next four years.
- ☑ **100 pictures of your high school sweetheart.** Couldn't just a few do? If you really do love each other, you don't need that many to remember his or her face; and if you don't, then why scare off potential new interests with an in-room shrine?

It's Time to Say Goodbye

Saying goodbye is hard, especially since it's probably the first time you'll be away for such a long time. Your parents are tearful



Allison's Corner

In my mother's and my nervousness over my leaving for school, we overpacked. Buying toiletries in bulk was my mom's way of preparing me for my life on my own. As much as I appreciated not having to buy shampoo all year, it would have saved space and not really affected the money spent if I had just gotten more when mine ran out. Instead, I was left at the end of the year with three untouched shampoo bottles, four extra toothpaste tubes, and a surplus of shaving cream, razors, and toothbrushes.

about their baby growing up and you just don't want to leave your cute puppy behind. Don't worry, you'll be home soon—Thanksgiving is just three months away. (And by then you might not want to leave school at all.)

Be understanding of your parents' feelings and don't be ashamed to feel sad or cry. This *is* a big event for everyone. Reassure them that you'll call and email often—you can decide later just how precisely you'll stick to your promise. Also, although most young siblings will probably pretend that they are happy to see you leave and get your room and stereo, they'll miss you. You don't have to embarrass them by talking about it, but just know that they're sad to see you go.

As you leave, set aside some time to say goodbye so you don't rush it as you run out at the last minute. This isn't cheesy, it's necessary.

Saying goodbye to friends can be extremely weird and emotional. All of you have doubts and fears about the strength of your friendships and have no idea how going away to college

might change them. Some friendships fade with time, yet others are successful and remain strong for many years.

Each relationship has a different dynamic so it's difficult to give general advice, but it's a good idea to talk to your friends before you go about how to stay in touch. Exchange email addresses, phone numbers, and assurances that staying in touch is important. If you'd rather not make any commitments, you can always give them a big hug and say: "See you at Thanksgiving!"

The key thing to realize is that saying goodbye is tough for you and the people around you. Take your time.

Remember Old Friends

"You'll make new friends at school, but they cannot replace the relationships you have with those from home. The feeling of the reunion with old friends is priceless."

—Sophomore, Drew University

You know this, of course, but here's a reminder—it takes effort to maintain relationships that matter to you. Call, email, use Instant Messenger, and send pictures. Involve your family and your old friends in your new life and ask them about their own. Good friends are hard to find, and just because you've made new ones doesn't mean that your trusted high school buddies should not be part of your life. Maintaining old friendships can be strenuous, especially as you and your friends are overwhelmed with new experiences at college. Do the best you can, and don't hold too many grudges if your friend doesn't call you for a week—just think of how crazed and busy you are.



Friendships

by Rosaleen, Sophomore, Vassar College

I left a group of about a dozen guys and dolls who had once been inseparable in high school. Over the years certain people became closer than others, but the summer before we went away to school was all about enjoying each other's company and having fun. Now I realize that maybe we were preparing ourselves for a big change in our relationships.

Profundity aside, it was hard to leave home. It's a big step that you make all at once, but, though most people will not maintain all of their friendships, the important ones will remain as consistent and as wonderful as they were when you lived down the street from your friends or saw them every day in the halls.

I've learned that you'll find yourself making an effort to stay in touch with those who were and are most important to you. And while the idea of losing some friends along the way may be scary, it's a part of growing up. The friendships that you'll form in college are on a different level from so many high school friendships, and it's that maturity that takes you from childhood into adulthood. It's scary to think about, but it's great to be a part of.

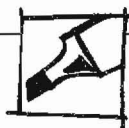
All I can say is: Don't worry too much. That which will be will be, whether you're scared of it or not.

Home Strange Home

If you're going to college away from home, returning to your stomping grounds for the first time can be difficult. You've got a new life at college and your parents and friends aren't as integral a part of it as they're used to being. You feel strange not knowing

all of the details of what went on at home while you were gone and might feel left out.

It might shock you to find out that your family has moved on with their lives, your room is now the den or the computer room—and painted in that gawky green color you can't stand—your siblings are wearing your clothes, and your parents are planning a vacation without you. Weren't they all supposed to just sulk and wait for you to come home? No, and trust us, you wouldn't want that. Your life has changed, and so has theirs,



Apologies

by Brian, Senior, Scranton University

When I came home from college for the first time, things were all the same, except my room always looked different. I guess the whole house did—I noticed the subtle changes around the house much more.

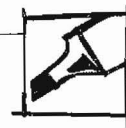
I distinctly remember this being the point in my life where I realized my parents were people who had their own lives. I started realizing that they've made some mistakes just like I have. Living away from home really taught me a new level of respect for my parents. I also found that being away from my sister brought a lot to our relationship. I genuinely felt awful about being such a crummy older brother when we were kids. I think I apologized to her, and if I didn't, I should have.

I also remember actually apologizing to my mom around this time for being such a reckless and brazen teenager. I remember her sitting me down my junior year in high school and asking me to stop drinking so much, then the next day I came home plastered. So, I let her know that I was sorry about being such a "teen."

and you need to adjust to your relationship as independent adults.

Your parents and you might step on each other's toes a bit during your first time back, especially when you come home at four in the morning and they're up waiting for you and asking why you didn't call. Try to be sensitive—yeah, you're on your own now, but they're probably not used to that yet. Just apologize and let them know next time you're planning to be out late. You'll escape to your freedom soon enough when you go back to school.

When you hang out with your old friends, it's fine to describe your new life to them, but be careful to not get competitive about it. Don't compare yourself to them or constantly brag about what a great time you're having. Everyone will feel pressured to be having the ultimate college experience, but in reality it's not easy to be so happy so quickly.



Going to College Close to Home

Going to college close to home might seem like less of an adjustment than going away to school, but it's still a big change. While you know the general area, the campus is a city all on its own and you'll have to adjust to it all the same. You'll be meeting tons of new people and making new friends, and will have to juggle new friendships with old friends who might be going to school at your college or one nearby.

Here are a few hints about dealing with the transition to college if it's close to home:

- Make a special effort to meet new people and forge new friendships. It might be tempting to stick to your old group of friends, but it's important to make new connections as well.
- Talk with your family and set expectations about coming home or them coming to visit you unannounced on a Friday night. Also, if you plan to come home to do laundry all the time, make sure your folks are okay with it.
- Being familiar with the area surrounding your college has some great benefits—offer to show a few of your new friends around, take them to your favorite coffee shop or CD store, or just take a walk.
- If you want to offer a friend to stay over at your family's house for Thanksgiving or winter break, ask your parents first. But this is a really nice gesture that many students who might not be able to fly home for the holidays will really appreciate.

3

Avoiding Living Hell

Being randomly paired with a person whose only similarity to you is their gender and being required to spend a peaceful year in a ten-by-ten room is a relatively unreasonable expectation. Even living with your best friend would result in a conflict occasionally. So brace yourself for the worst but be openhearted for the best.

Keep in mind that your freshman-year roommate does not have to be your best friend. You don't even have to pretend to like each other, but you should try not to make yourselves miserable. Approach this new person with an open mind and remember that everyone has a different background and weird habits, even you. Be considerate and willing to compromise, but don't be passive. Your room is your space, too, so assert yourself and form a respectful relationship with your roommate as you remember kindergarten and learn how to share.

- No Time for Lies
- First Impressions Don't Always Count
- I Have to Live Here?!
- Take a Chance on Me
- Rules of Engagement
- Learn to Share
- You've Been Sexiled!
- Escape Pod
- Housing Options Galore
- It's Time for a Change

No Time for Lies

You might be tempted, but don't lie on your roommate questionnaire to make yourself look good. No one cares about how early you like to get up and study. The only thing the questionnaire will be used for is to pair you off with someone moderately similar to you, so be honest.

If you smoke, don't deny it or minimize the actual degree to which you do it; a roommate who doesn't will nag you endlessly. If you're pretty quiet and don't like rock 'n roll blasting till one in the morning, say so—you're not being uncool, you're making sure that your ears survive the year. Even if you vow to yourself that you're going to go to bed early once you get to college, be honest and admit it if you're a night owl.

You get the point: Be honest and don't make stuff up. After you're done filling it out, read your questionnaire and see if it sounds like it describes you. It should at least get your daily habits right.

First Impressions Don't Always Count

When your room assignment letter arrives in the summer, you'll stare blankly at the name and home address, wondering who this stranger is and what lies in store for both of you. So, the first step is to call your roomie and try to make some kind of human contact. You can call under the pretense of planning what you'll each bring to the room, but use this small talk to get to know something about each other.

Just remember not to get too attached to your first impression. Talking on the phone to someone you don't know is not natural, and it's hard to really be yourself for both of you. Take it easy.

On this somewhat uncomfortable phone call, you should discuss practical things, such as whether you're going to have a fridge and, if so, who's bringing it. Try to think of any big items that you'll definitely need in your room, but keep in mind which are essential (a phone) and which are not (a couch). Are you willing to share stereos? Should one of you buy a microwave? Remember: Money is important and you'll want to split things pretty evenly. Also, keep in mind that whoever buys an item will most likely get to keep it next year when you change rooms.

Our advice is to avoid buying things to share and splitting their cost. This can cause some tension at the end of the year when you have to decide who keeps the item and how much the other person should pay for it. Stick to bringing things to share—you bring the stereo, your roommate brings the fridge.

I Have to Live Here?!

Most college rooms are small, have cinder block walls, and look like jail cells—not exactly what you saw in the brochure, right? You might be one of those people who could care less about the way your room looks. If you're not, then use your creativity to spruce it up and make it more like something you can call your home.

- Use halogen lamps instead of overhead fluorescent lighting.
- Buy a few plants and put them somewhere where they can get light.
- Cover at least some of the cold linoleum floor with a colorful rug.
- Put up posters and pictures that you like, remembering to leave some wall space for your roommate.
- Organize your stuff in stackable bins or milk crates so that it's not thrown all over the room.



Allison's Corner

The first day of school my roommate and I bought this tiny, beautiful plant and named it Mikali. As the year wore on, our baby grew at a rapid rate and began to look like it was from the Little Shop of Horrors. When it started spewing seeds over our windowsill, we had to change Mikali's name to Oscar because the plant simply grew too evil. Our laughter and fear over Oscar brought us together, and at the end of the year we battled over the custody of our surprising, terrifying treasure.



We Talk With . . .

Deepy, Senior, Brown University

How do you make your dorm room the "hot spot"?

First and foremost, make sure you have Lil' Kim's "Hotspot" blaring through your speakers.

No. For real.

The most inviting room I ever saw said "Free Cookies Inside." If you need friends, offer food.

So besides food, what else creates a welcoming atmosphere?

A comfy chair. Board games. Pop—oh wait, I'm from the Midwest; I mean soda.

What makes a room hip?

Old-school Nintendo helps out a little. Sure, your GPA might drop a few points, but having video game buddies is worth it. Oh, and a fridge, too!

What makes a bad room?

Crusty food on the floor. Stuffed animals if you're a guy. Underwear hanging all over to dry if you're a girl. Door closed. Too many pictures of yourself. Too many pictures of your friends and your so-cool home social life.

What about wall coverings?

Avoid the mass, cliché posters. Go for something unique. Like a giant picture of your mom—just kidding.

Put a little creative effort into making your room look and feel like a comfortable place. It will pay off that one horrible day when you flunk a pop quiz, spill soda on your new jeans, and run to your room for escape. Escapes should feel good.

Take a Chance on Me

Whatever your roommate situation might be, here are a few initial rules of engagement to keep in mind:

- **Be friendly.** Whether you're usually outgoing or keep to yourself, make an effort initially to talk to your roommate, to relate, and to just hang out together. You don't have to try to be friends, but making an effort to be nice will pay off.
- **Give each other space.** This is tough if you're literally sharing one room rather than a small apartment where each of you can have some privacy. If your roommate comes back from a shower, maybe you can step out for a few minutes so that he or she can change. Or if you need to make a private phone call, ask if your roommate won't mind giving you a few minutes. These are small gestures, but the effort counts, and your roommate might follow suit.
- **Don't try to do everything together.** If you click with your roommate, then by all means, hang out, go to orientation, and sit together in the dining hall. But don't force it—you'll have a long time to get used to and to get to know each other. Too much time together initially can potentially backfire.

In general, recognize that you don't need to be best friends, or even friends, with your roommate. If you are, great, but if not, all you need is someone you can get along with.

Rules of Engagement

"Once things start to go badly, try to grin and bear it. That works until your roommate breaks out his turntables and plays the most mind-stabbingly bad 'music' you've ever heard. That's when you pretend to be asleep. Once your roommate does things that are not silenced by sleep (smoking, eating smelly foods, singing, etc.), you must politely request a few rules."

—Sophomore, University of Hartford

For those of you without siblings, your roommate will be the first person with whom you'll truly have to share. This might seem like an elementary skill, but it's hard to totally immerse yourself in the culture of dual use if you've never shared a small room before. The most important thing to do in the first weeks of school is to make general rules with your roommate about how you want your room to be so that you can both be happy. If you and your roommate are compatible, this will be easy; if not, this will be necessary for your mutual sanity.

The most basic rules deal with hours. There's a time for music and dancing and a time for the sound of silence. Try to work out some simple rules, such as Monday through Thursday after 9:00, your room will be for studying only. Or, if you both like to party, agree to blast your music well into the night. If you like to study in your room, assert yourself and make sure your roommate knows that you need quiet time. At the same

time, remember that you can also study in the library, so be reasonable.

Visitors can also be an issue. If your roommate's friends like to gab at two in the morning while you're sleeping, you should politely ask them to be quiet and should talk to your roommate about having people over late at night. Along the same lines, bedtime is an essential discussion. Hopefully you'll both have honestly filled out your rooming questionnaire and can agree on what time the lights go out. Even if you don't go to bed at the same time, one of you can always use your desk lamp or even go to the library.

The most important thing is to be respectful and compromise—this is a home for both of you. You have the right to be comfortable in your own room but need to give that same freedom to your roomie.

"Show as much respect as you can to your roomie, and always consider how he or she might view the things that you do. Just be assertive and talk openly about things that bug you. Even if you try to show that something bothers you, your roommate may have absolutely no idea."

—Sophomore, Rutgers University

Learn to Share

Everyone has a lot of stuff and there is very little space—try to split things fairly. For instance, if your roommate gets the larger closet, you should get the larger dresser. Also, try to use the space under your bed efficiently. Lofting beds when possible can save a ton of space and leave room for a couch or a beanbag.

When putting up decorations, don't monopolize all of the wall



We Talk With . . .

Ellen, Freshman, Brown University

Did you have a horror roommate experience during your freshman year?

My freshman roommate left the window open all the time, even when it was twenty degrees out, and went to bed at 10:30 every night. When she got sick after midterms, she blamed my typing and having a light on while she was trying to sleep for making her sick. Needless to say, we fought constantly. I ended up doing most of my work in a friend's room.

What was your biggest social challenge in getting adjusted to college?

Socially, college was a little daunting. I graduated from a small school—there were ninety kids in my graduating class. After seeing the same people over and over for eight years, it was amazing, but a little scary, to be in a place where it seemed like I never saw the same person twice.

What was the hard part about making friends on campus?

Getting those friends to do things. At the beginning everybody feels really swamped with work and meetings, and just doing laundry seems like an insurmountable task. When things settle down, it's easier to catch up with new friends.

space, unless your roommate doesn't mind. You can survive without every single one of your favorite posters on the walls, really. And don't make disgusted faces when your roommate puts up a decoration you hate—it's definitely something you can deal with.



A Few Words on Phone Etiquette

"The only phone jack in our room was near my roommate's bed. It was awful because I always felt like I was borrowing her phone, even though it was for both of us. I ended up making a lot of calls from the pay phone in the campus center."

—Recent Grad, Wesleyan University

The phone has the dubious distinction of being at the core of many disagreements and fights between roommates, especially if you only have one line in your room. Who uses it, when, how often, and with how much privacy are all issues that will invariably come up.

If you know that your roommate religiously calls his girlfriend every night at 8:00, be nice and don't hang on the phone during that time. And if you need privacy to talk to someone, just ask. No need to make it a huge deal, but you should recognize that unless you're both considerate, there will be conflicts.

Another way to avoid phone quarrels is to have a cell phone. You can get one pretty inexpensively—a basic plan, usually with free long distance, can run you from \$40 to \$60 a month—and maybe save yourself a lot of trouble.

Cleanliness is important to everyone, although to different degrees. Now that you share a space with someone, you'll have to pay a bit more attention to keeping that space somewhat clean. Odor is not a good thing. So if your shoes smell, be polite and leave them outside. If you're sloppy, try to contain your mess to your side of the room and not infringe on your roommate's territory.

Privacy is a hot commodity at college, and both you and your roommate will need some. Be respectful and give privacy, and be assertive and ask for it. Some private time will come naturally as you both go about your days and different schedules. But sometimes it will take effort and one of you will have to leave the room for a bit.

Eventually you'll probably learn to read each other's cues, but at the beginning, don't be afraid to speak up.

You've Been Sexiled!

We might have made it up, or you might have heard it before, but sexile is definitely at home in the college student's vernacular. Combine "sex" and "exile" and you get the following situation:

You've just arrived home from a party, and your door seems to be locked. "No problem," you think, as you swiftly whip out your key. Falling through the door, you stumble and see a blur of sheets and flesh. As you rush out covering your eyes in shame, your roommate emerges, fixing her shirt, and apologizes profusely, but asks if she can have the room to herself tonight. You, our friend, have been sexiled.

The best way to deal with these situations, whether you're the lucky sexiler or the sexilee, is to plan ahead. Add these kinds of situations to your "things to discuss on the first day" agenda.

When possible, prenotification is the best option. If you know you'll be having a "guest," ask your roommate if he or she could bunk with someone else for the night. If it's an impromptu sleepover, you should agree on an inconspicuous sign to alert the other not to enter. Whether it's a sticky note or a smiley face

drawn on the board hanging on your door, this will indicate to enter only with caution—and if possible, not to enter at all. If you absolutely need to get into the room even with the sign on, knock loudly and wait. When you go in, grab only what you need and look down as you leave.

"I came home and was promptly asked to leave, but seeing that it was raining, I had nowhere to go and was stuck inside my apartment. Sitting in the hallway that had recently been coated with polyurethane, I inhaled the fumes all night and made some ridiculous phone calls. Grrrrrrr."

—Sophomore, Fashion Institute of Technology

The most important thing about using your room for sexual endeavors is to respect the other person. Leave their side of the room out of it and be clean. The ultimately important thing is to never, ever make out with someone when your roommate is in the room. That's rude and disrespectful to all parties involved. It's hard to forgive a traumatic thing like that. Don't do it.

Escape Pod

"The best and worst thing about dorm life is that there is always something to do and someone to do it with. It's great to say that you're never bored, but hard not to get distracted."

—Sophomore, Richmond University

A great benefit of living in a dorm is that there are many people other than your roommate with whom you can spend time

without going far. No better way to diffuse roommate tension than to get out of the room for a bit and cool off. Get to know your dormmates, spend time hanging out with them, and leave your door open when you feel like having visitors.

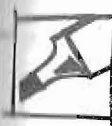
"I'd never lived in a dorm before and it was pretty overwhelming to have people barge in and out of our room during orientation. But after the initial shock, the dorm proved to be a great social setting. Don't worry too much about privacy, especially during the first few months of intense friendmaking."

—Recent Grad, Wesleyan University

Take advantage of the social vibe dorm life has to offer. If you need a quiet place to study, the library is usually your best bet. Leave your dorm room for relaxing and socializing. Investigate common areas in the dorm and find out what amenities your dorm might have to offer in the way of kitchens, game rooms, fitness centers, and practice rooms. These are wonderful resources to have at your disposal, as well as great places to meet like-minded dormmates.

Just make sure that you do get "outside" from time to time and make contact with people not from your dorm. It's healthy and it helps to avoid isolating yourself with a certain group of people.

A common dorm problem is hall noise. What do you do if your neighbors are blasting music at four in the morning when you're trying to sleep? Calmly ask them to turn it down. Don't yell, don't appear overly angry or annoyed, just ask. And make sure to have some earplugs nearby in case the lowered volume still doesn't cut it.



Comic Relief: *Laundry Days*

by Jay, Junior, Columbia University

Sooner or later, it happens: You run out of socks, underwear, or clothes in general, and you're reduced to walking around campus naked. Don't let nudity happen to you!

I stared into the face of nudity several times freshman year, and I was only able to pull through each near-naked experience by dragging three bags of dirty clothes down to the laundry room—six washers and six dryers for six hundred students. Every trip down to the laundry room is fraught with suds and lint, and I always make sure to say a little prayer to the Laundry Gods: "Please, don't shrink my clothes or let the colors run," before my ritual sacrifice of detergent and fabric softener. The Laundry Gods, however, have a sense of humor.

In my first near-naked experience, I got into a fight with a dryer (but the dryer started it). The dryer claimed that it was "done," but my clothes weren't dry. So I used my male fix-it intuition and kicked the dryer. Oddly enough, my clothes were still wet. I hadn't kicked the dryer hard enough, but after several more rounds with the dryer, I gave up and took my wet clothes back to my room in defeat. I hung underwear on my floor lamp and socks from my TV antennas, and the next morning, I avoided nudity but not dampness. The lesson: If the dryer doesn't work, you must kick it harder than I can.

There was another near-naked experience where the Laundry Gods decided to mix in with my clothes some underwear that was, um, more feminine than my typical underwear.

The lesson: If you find women's underwear in your laundry, and you don't wear women's underwear, don't tell your floormates because they will laugh at you and make the same unfunny joke that you are thinking of right now.

"Don't be uptight about keeping things clean in your room or keeping the noise down. Getting mad at people is just frustrating and more annoying to you than to them."

—Junior, Moravian College

Housing Options Galore

While more often than not you'll end up in a double during your freshman year, other possible arrangements include having a single or sharing a few rooms with three or four people. Each has positives and negatives, so do your best to make the best out of your situation.

Having a single means you have the privacy to do whatever and whenever you want. As wonderful as this sounds, singles can often be lonely places, and you have to make a concerted effort not to isolate yourself. Especially in the first few weeks, keep your door open and make friends with the people in your hall. Since you have no roommate, take advantage of your space and invite people over—leave your door open when you're at home and don't mind some company.

Having multiple roommates sometimes presents a greater challenge than living with just one person. All of the issues that we've just talked about apply here, and in greater magnitude, so talking stuff out and setting a few rules is important. Having a room meeting is a good idea once in a while.

Living with more people can give you a great group of friends and allow you not to spend a concentrated amount of time with just one person. But living in a group can create its own issues. Never, ever talk behind one roommate's back to the other roommates—it's not fair to isolate anyone and it can seriously

backfire. Also, don't obsess if your roommates seem to bond better than you with them. This happens. Find friends outside of your room and spend time with them.

It's Time for a Change

It happens: You've tried, talked, made rules and broken rules, and it doesn't work. You're stressed out, your grades are slipping, and you stay out as late as you can to get back to your room when your roommate is already asleep. You hate your living situation and, yes, you might be at a point when you need to think about changing rooms.

This is a difficult and last-resort option, so don't take it lightly. If you're the one moving out, you'll have to readjust to a new roommate—unless it's a single—and new hallmates, and will have to go through the initial steps all over again. (Plus, it's a pain to pack up all of your stuff and drag it across campus.)

Having said that, if you really do need to change your living situation, do it. It's definitely possible and freshmen do it all the time. Talk to the people in your residential life office, explain the situation to them, and politely request a new room. In some cases, you'll be asked to wait until next semester to move.

Confronting your roommate about your move isn't easy, even if you don't get along. He or she might be relieved to get rid of you but will likely be a bit hurt and annoyed to have to deal with a new roommate and adjustments that come with the change. Don't be overly mean, just say that you're moving out and that you think it will be better for both of you.